

EXITING THE 8(a) BD PROGRAM

§ 124.301 What are the ways a business may leave the 8(a) BD program?

A concern participating in the 8(a) BD program may leave the program by any of the following means:

- (a) Graduation upon the expiration of the program term established pursuant to § 124.2;
- (b) Voluntary early graduation;
- (c) Early graduation pursuant to the provisions of §§ 124.302 and 124.304; or
- (d) Termination pursuant to the provisions of §§ 124.303 and 124.304.

§ 124.302 What is early graduation?

(a) *General.* SBA may graduate a firm from the 8(a) BD program prior to the expiration of its Program Term where SBA determines that:

(1) The concern has successfully completed the 8(a) BD program by substantially achieving the targets, objectives, and goals set forth in its business plan prior to the expiration of its program term, and has demonstrated the ability to compete in the marketplace without assistance under the 8(a) BD program; or

(2) One or more of the disadvantaged owners upon whom the Participant's eligibility is based are no longer economically disadvantaged.

(b) *Criteria for determining whether a Participant has met its goals and objectives.* In determining whether a Participant has substantially achieved the targets, objectives and goals of its business plan and in assessing the overall competitive strength and viability of a Participant, SBA considers the totality of circumstances, including the following factors:

- (1) Degree of sustained profitability;
- (2) Sales trends, including improved ratio of non-8(a) sales to 8(a) sales since program entry;
- (3) Business net worth, financial ratios, working capital, capitalization, and access to credit and capital;
- (4) Current ability to obtain bonding;
- (5) A comparison of the Participant's business and financial profiles with profiles of non-8(a) BD businesses having the same primary four-digit SIC code as the Participant;

(6) Strength of management experience, capability, and expertise; and

(7) Ability to operate successfully without 8(a) contracts.

(c) *Excessive withdrawals.* SBA may graduate a Participant prior to the expiration of its program term where excessive funds or other assets have been withdrawn from the Participant (see § 124.112(d)(3)), causing SBA to determine that the Participant has demonstrated the ability to compete in the marketplace without assistance under the 8(a) BD program.

(d) *Benchmark achievement.* SBA may graduate a Participant prior to the expiration of its program term where the Participant has substantially achieved the targets, objectives and goals of its business plan as adjusted under § 124.403(d) and its primary industry classification falls within a SIC Major Group in which the benchmarks described in § 124.403(d) have been achieved.

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§ 124.303 What is termination?

(a) SBA may terminate the participation of a concern in the 8(a) BD program prior to the expiration of the concern's Program Term for good cause. Examples of good cause include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) Submission of false information in the concern's 8(a) BD application, regardless of whether correct information would have caused the concern to be denied admission to the program, and regardless of whether correct information was given to SBA in accompanying documents or by other means.

(2) Failure by the concern to maintain its eligibility for program participation.

(3) Failure by the concern for any reason, including the death of an individual upon whom eligibility was based, to maintain ownership, full-time day-to-day management, and control by disadvantaged individuals.

(4) Failure by the concern to obtain prior written approval from SBA for any changes in ownership or business structure, management or control pursuant to §§ 124.105 and 124.106.

(5) Failure by the concern to disclose to SBA the extent to which non-disadvantaged persons or firms participate in the management of the Participant business concern.

(6) Failure by the concern or one or more of the concern's principals to maintain good character.

(7) A pattern of failure to make required submissions or responses to SBA in a timely manner, including a failure to provide required financial statements, requested tax returns, reports, updated business plans, information requested by SBA's Office of Inspector General, or other requested information or data within 30 days of the date of request.

(8) Cessation of business operations by the concern.

(9) Failure by the concern to pursue competitive and commercial business in accordance with its business plan, or failure in other ways to make reasonable efforts to develop and achieve competitive viability.

(10) A pattern of inadequate performance by the concern of awarded section 8(a) contracts.

(11) Failure by the concern to pay or repay significant financial obligations owed to the Federal Government.

(12) Failure by the concern to obtain and keep current any and all required permits, licenses, and charters, including suspension or revocation of any professional license required to operate the business.

(13) Excessive withdrawals, including transfers of funds or other business assets, from the concern for the personal benefit of any of its owners or any person or entity affiliated with the owners that hinder the development of the concern (see § 124.112(d)).

(14) Unauthorized use of SBA direct or guaranteed loan proceeds or violation of an SBA loan agreement.

(15) Submission by or on behalf of a Participant of false information to SBA, including false certification of compliance with non-8(a) business activity targets under § 124.507 or failure to report changes that adversely affect the program eligibility of an applicant or program participant under § 124.204 and § 124.112, where responsible officials of the 8(a) BD Participant knew or

should have known the submission to be false.

(16) Debarment, suspension, voluntary exclusion, or ineligibility of the concern or its principals pursuant to part 145 of this title or FAR subpart 9.4 (48 CFR part 9, subpart 9.4).

(17) Conduct by the concern, or any of its principals, indicating a lack of business integrity. Such conduct may be demonstrated by information related to a criminal indictment or guilty plea, a criminal conviction, or a judgment or settlement in a civil case.

(18) Willful failure by the Participant business concern to comply with applicable labor standards and obligations.

(19) Material breach of any terms and conditions of the 8(a) BD Program Participation Agreement.

(20) Willful violation by a concern, or any of its principals, of any SBA regulation pertaining to material issues.

(b) The examples of good cause listed in paragraph (a) of this section are intended to be illustrative only. Other grounds for terminating a Participant from the 8(a) BD program for cause may exist and may be used by SBA.

§ 124.304 What are the procedures for early graduation and termination?

(a) *General.* The same procedures apply to both early graduation and termination of Participants from the 8(a) BD program.

(b) *Letter of Intent to Terminate or Graduate Early.* When SBA believes that a Participant should be terminated or graduated prior to the expiration of its program term, SBA will notify the concern in writing. The Letter of Intent to Terminate or Graduate Early will set forth the specific facts and reasons for SBA's findings, and will notify the concern that it has 30 days from the date of service (as defined in § 134.204 of this title) of the letter to submit a written response to SBA explaining why the proposed ground(s) should not justify termination or early graduation. Service is defined in § 134.204.

(c) *Recommendation and decision.* Following the 30-day response period, the Assistant Administrator for DPCE (AA/DPCE) or designee will consider the proposed early graduation or termination and any information submitted